
OLR Bill Analysis

sSB 309 (File 665, as amended by Senate "A")*

AN ACT CONCERNING MUNICIPAL COSTS FOR THE CARE OF CONFISCATED ANIMALS AND ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE ON THE HUMANE TREATMENT OF ANIMALS IN MUNICIPAL SHELTERS.

SUMMARY:

By law, a court may vest temporary ownership of neglected or cruelly treated animals in a person or state, municipal, or other agency. When it does this, the animal's owner generally must either (1) give up ownership of the animal or (2) post a surety or cash bond with the agency or person in whom the court vested the animal's temporary care and custody. This bill increases the bond amount from \$500 total to \$500 per animal.

The bill expands the Department of Agriculture (DoAg) commissioner's use of the animal abuse cost recovery and animal population control accounts (see BACKGROUND). It requires him to use these accounts to reimburse a municipality for the cost of providing temporary care to animals that lasts more than 30 days and exceeds the posted bond amount. It limits total annual reimbursements to municipalities from the (1) animal abuse cost recovery account to \$25,000 and (2) animal population control account to \$50,000.

The bill also establishes a nine-member task force to study (1) the humane treatment of animals in municipal and regional shelters and (2) other matters concerning such shelters. The task force must report its findings and recommendations to the Environment and Planning and Development committees by January 1, 2015.

*Senate Amendment "A" replaces the underlying file (File 665) with similar provisions. Compared to the underlying file, the amendment:

1. limits reimbursement from the animal abuse cost recovery and

animal population control accounts to municipalities, making individuals and other public and private agencies ineligible;

2. caps reimbursement from the accounts at a specified dollar amount;
3. expands the focus of the task force to include regional, as well as municipal, shelters;
4. adds the DoAg commissioner or his designee to the task force;
5. adds qualifications for the task force appointees; and
6. makes other minor and technical changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

TASK FORCE

Areas Task Force Must Consider

The bill requires the task force to consider:

1. recommendations for establishing standards for the humane treatment of animals in municipal and regional shelters;
2. existing education and training standards for animal control officers (ACOs) on current license laws;
3. rules, regulations, and penalties for abuse;
4. developing a system to track people who have been convicted of animal abuse to prevent them from acquiring animals from shelters in other municipalities or states;
5. establishing standards for shelters when evaluating potential animal adopters;
6. establishing rules and responsibilities for volunteer groups that work with shelters and ACOs; and
7. creating a framework to coordinate the efforts of local humane

organizations with volunteer groups, foster groups, and municipal and regional shelters.

Membership

Under the bill, the task force consists of (1) the DoAg commissioner or his designee and (2) eight members the top six legislative leaders appoint as Table 1 shows. Legislators may be appointed as members. Appointments must be made within 30 days after the bill's passage, and the appointing authority fills any vacancy.

Table 1: Task Force Appointees

<i>Appointing Authority</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Qualifications</i>
Senate president pro tempore	2	One ACO One Judicial Branch representative
House speaker	2	One member of a local animal welfare advocacy organization One sworn municipal police officer
Senate majority leader	1	A licensed veterinarian
Senate minority leader	1	A chief elected official from a town with 25,000 or fewer people
House majority leader	1	A chief elected official from a town with more than 25,000 people
House minority leader	1	A person who volunteers to work with municipal shelters and ACOs

Chairpersons and Meetings

The bill requires the Senate president pro tempore and House speaker to select the task force's chairpersons from among its members. The chairpersons must schedule and hold the first task force meeting within 60 days after the bill's passage.

Staff

The bill requires the Planning and Development Committee's administrative staff to serve as the task force's staff.

Report and Termination

The bill requires the task force to report its findings and recommendations to the Environment and Planning and Development

committees by January 1, 2015. The task force terminates when it submits its report or on that date, whichever is later.

BACKGROUND

Animal Abuse Recovery Account

By law, the commissioner uses the animal abuse recovery account to cover the cost of housing and caring for animals DoAg seizes. The account is made up of (1) money DoAg collects from sales of seized animals at public auctions and (2) public or private donations.

Animal Population Control Account

By law, the commissioner uses the animal population control account to (1) implement, promote, and administer the animal population control program and (2) reimburse people completing animal control officer training. The account is made up of money collected from municipal pound adoption fees and license surcharges on unspayed or unneutered dogs.

Legislative History

The Senate referred the original bill (File 279) to the Planning and Development Committee, which reported a substitute bill that added the task force requirements.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Environment Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 28 Nay 0 (03/17/2014)

Planning and Development Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 18 Nay 0 (04/15/2014)